

On Thomas Luckmann's Theory of Religion

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The purpose of this article, theoretical in outlook, is to investigate the constituent elements or the basic conditions of man's religiosity. The main part of the article will be devoted to the discussion of T. Luckmann's thesis on the subject as is found in his *Invisible Religion*. We will begin with the presentation of Luckmann's view, trying also to indicate some of the problems that are raised by his thesis.

Luckmann's ultimate purpose is the development of the sociological theory of religion, whose lack of progress during several decades after Durkheim and M. Weber he deplores and criticizes in the first two chapters of his aforementioned book. Most research, he states, has been restricted to investigations in traditional and institutional religion, the underlying assumption being a tendency to equate institutional religion with religion *tout court*. Apart from his concern with the development of theory, Luckmann has argued that the growing marginality of traditional church religion not only necessitates an investigation into its causes, but also into the question whether any other forms of religion are replacing the institutional forms, in short, whether any new religion is in making¹⁾.

Luckmann then proposes to investigate the general anthropological conditions of religious phenomena: How are individual human beings capable of grasping meaning and how do subjective processes give rise to symbolic universes of meaning, in other words, how are they objectivated and institutionalized?²⁾

The incipient as well as the central point in the establishment of meaning systems is the individuation of consciousness, which takes place in the socially ongoing formation of Self. The two complementary aspects in the formation of Self are detachment from immediate experience and the integration of the subjective processes of recollection and anticipation into a socially defined, morally relevant biography. Detachment, occurring in and through a reflection on, or an interpretation of individual conduct by a partner, is the presupposition for the construction of a framework of interpretation and the establishment or objectivation of meaning. The integration of the subjective processes of recollection and anticipation into a biography is attributed to the continuity of social relations. It contains recollections and anticipations of other individuals. All this means that objectivation of meaning occurs in a social context. Meaning is bestowed on subjective processes in interpretative acts and located

in an interpretative scheme, the latter resulting from sedimented past experiences and ultimately in a system of meaning. Taken for granted are the human faculties of recollection and projection into the future as necessary conditions for the integration of individual biographies, as well as for the establishment of meaning systems. Luckmann repeatedly emphasizes that both biographies and systems of meaning originate only in a socially activated process. What takes place here is fundamentally the same as we find in the process of institutionalization or the formation of societal structures, which is clearly described elsewhere³⁾. Simply put, any human activity constitutes an externalization of subjective or intersubjective experience. It is objectivated through its transmission to, and recognition by other people who internalize its significance. This may result in habitual, typified activity. A certain activity becomes institutionalized when not only action or roles are typified but also the actors themselves.

It is Luckmann's conclusion that, by socially forming and developing a Self, individual human beings transcend their biological nature, because they would not be able to do so on the grounds of their individual biological resources only. It is this transcendence that Luckmann professes to be a universal and religious phenomenon from which spring the historically differentiated social forms of religion.

An elementary social form of religion is found in the configuration of meaning, which is also called a world view. This world view performs an essentially religious function for the individual *who internalizes it*, and by doing so, also transcends his biological nature⁴⁾. The internalization of a world view is potentially the same as constructing a system of meaning from the beginning. The world view itself is religiously elementary and non-specific. No single element of it is to be designated as religious. Its religious character stems from the *hierarchical arrangement of meaning*, or, the hierarchy of significance that it reveals. This hierarchy finds expression in specific, symbolic representations, referring explicitly to a *distinct level of reality* — *a level in which ultimate significance is located*, and which can be called a sacred cosmos. *Consequently, the configuration of religious representations that form a sacred universe is to be defined as a specific historical form of religion*⁵⁾.

As may be seen from our summary so far, Luckmann certainly discusses a very fundamental issue in the sociology of religion, i. e. the anthropological condition that makes religion possible. However, a serious problem involved in this analysis is, whether the social formation of Self, the socialization process and also personal identity, as we will see presently — indeed representing a transcendence of individual existence — has religious meaning or not. It will be my contention in later sections that religion is concerned with the phenomenon of transcendence but that not all transcendence can be considered as having a religious character.

Luckmann's discussion also becomes problematic in making an abrupt connection between the hierarchy of significance, containing non-specific religious meaning,

and a specific religious content, in other words, between a general and a specific social form of religion. Are all specific, symbolic representations of the hierarchy of meaning religious? If they are, do all symbolic representations have the same religious value?

The same problem of general and specific religiosity is felt more keenly in Luckmann's discussion of individual religiosity. Consistent with the foregoing conception of the religious character arising in the internalization of a world view, the author defines identity itself as a universal form of individual religiosity. He continues that, *if a society is religiously oriented ... if a sacred cosmos is internalized in a distinctly "religious" layer of individual consciousness, we may speak of a form of individual religiosity that is more specific than personal identity as such*⁶.

But how do we know when and why a society is religiously oriented? If there were only a difference of degree between a general and a social form of religion, the problem would probably be less complex, but still difficult enough, e. g., when we would try to evaluate the differences in religious quality as may be found in the various religious traditions or even within one religious tradition, between its various religious activities. As such, the latter questions cannot be taken into consideration in this article, but since, in the last instance, they seem to concern the relation between the condition of religion and religion itself, I will mainly treat the problem in this connection.

Before engaging in my own discussion on, 1) the matter of transcendence and, 2) the other conditions of religion I will review and discuss some partial evaluations of Luckmann's work, namely those by M. Hill and R. Robertson.

Evaluation and Criticism of Luckmann's Analysis

M. Hill, in his review of contemporary studies of religion, wants to trace their classic roots⁷. In Luckmann's case a Durkheimian approach and emphasis is found throughout the discussion. More to the point, Luckmann's central theme is said to be the individual and the social order, a reinterpretation of that of the famous predecessor, while Luckmann's important concept of objectivation is said to be a paraphrasing of Durkheim's concept of collective representations. Luckmann's view of religion would have been influenced by the same source. It is described as a religious outlook that lies at the very center of man's experience of his natural and social environment; it is the key factor of endowing society with moral authority⁸.

Tracing the relationship between contemporary research and classical theory is a valuable enterprise in the history of sociology but of less interest to theory itself and therefore to this article. However, I would like to make a few complementary and some contrary remarks.

Since Durkheim is one of the pioneers of sociology it is not surprising at all to find similar sociological conceptions or parallels as to which themes are of central

importance to sociology. The relationship of the individual and society is a good example. It is an essential ingredient in all sociology, but it is not necessarily the focal point in every discussion, as I think it is not in Luckmann's present book. Central here is "the religious existence" of the individual in society. It is this point that should be the object of evaluation.

Concerning the relationship between Luckmann and Durkheim, it seems to be more appropriate to treat it as a matter of historical and logical continuity rather than one of strict influence as Hill seems to say by calling Luckmann a Durkheimian sociologist, which is apt to cause misunderstanding about the former. Certainly not Durkheimian are Luckmann's tone and manner of discussion, but proving this is rather onerous and not very rewarding. Easier to demonstrate is the absence of material evidence of Durkheim's influence because Luckmann makes only two or three rather peripheral references to Durkheim's work. The main sources he avows are A. Schutz's existential phenomenology, G. Mead's social psychology and C. Cooley's theory of socialization as simply can be seen from the notes to the central chapter III on the anthropological condition of religion. The less central references in the same chapter are references to Bergson, Husserl, Sartre and Halbwachs. Throughout the book we find references to parallel discussions by P. Berger, who is also much influenced by the phenomenological school.

A major difference between Durkheim and Luckmann's discussion of religion is related to their conception of the subject matter. Both scholars consider the phenomenon of religion to be a man-made reality, but quite in a different sense. Durkheim stretches his conception of religion as far as to include in it the sacred as a social category, which finds its origin and ultimate meaning in society. When we look at some details, we see that Durkheim argues that the sacred things are usually insignificant and by themselves unable to arouse such strong feelings as sacredness. Moreover, the central role in the primitive cult is not played by the totemic animal or plant, but by the totem or symbol, representing both the spiritual force and the clan itself. Durkheim therefore concludes that if there is only one symbol for the clan god and the clan itself, it is because both are one and the same thing. The god is the clan personified⁹⁾. Durkheim not only argues that society has the moral power to arouse the sensation of the divine in the minds of people, he also generalizes about his view that *if the ideas of the sacred, of the soul and gods are to be explained sociologically, it should be presumed scientifically that, in principle, the same explanation is valid for all the peoples among whom the same ideas with the same essential characteristics are found*¹⁰⁾.

Luckmann, on the other hand, may be reminiscent of Durkheim in his functional approach, e. g., attributing religious significance to the hierarchical arrangement of meaning in the world view, but this is not the case when he adds that its specific representations refer explicitly to a *distinct level of reality*, as has been stated in our

summary. In Luckmann's own words, *The "reality" of the world of every life is concrete, unproblematic and, as we may say, "profane" ... The domain transcending the world of everyday life is experienced as "different" and mysterious ... That "reality" cannot be dealt with habitually, indeed, it is beyond the control of ordinary men ... The quality that defines the transcendent domain is its "sacredness"*¹¹. The latter expressions, as also the frequent use of the term "transcendence", seems to suggest that the sacred cosmos is not to be reduced to a mere social category. Of course, Luckmann cannot affirm this explicitly, since such an affirmation, as well as its negation, is inimical to an empirical discipline. He, therefore, brackets the terms profane, the sacred and the like¹².

One more point of difference in conception of religion is that Durkheim, in contrast to Luckmann, conceives of religion as a reification rather than an objectivation, as a static reality rather than a dynamic or dialectical one. This follows, in general from Durkheim's view of social facts as "things", and in particular, from his view of religion as a reality "*sui generis*", in which he finds the roots of the fundamental categories of thought, magic and science. He concludes: "*Consequently, summarizing we can say that all the important institutions derive from religion. If religion is the cause of everything that is essential in society, it is because the idea of society is the soul of religion*"¹³. This reality *sui generis* need not be a reification, but if everything essential in society is thought to derive from that reality, it cannot but be considered as the undifferentiated core of everything, which is not far removed from being somekind of "thing" or other substance whose relationship to man is unclear. Also Luckmann could say that the idea of society is the soul of religion, but not that everything social derives from religion. In Luckmann's view, religion as well as society derive from the social condition of man, from externalized, objectivated and further internalized human activity.

A different discussion of Luckmann's view of religion is found in R. Robertson's *The Sociological Interpretation of Religion*. As is stated in its introduction, Robertson is primarily concerned with the theoretical problems of religion at the macro-sociological level, especially with the relationship of religious orientations and other orientations to the problem of meaning. Central to the whole treatise is the substantial definition of the religious phenomenon. It is in this discussion that Luckmann's definition is found to be too inclusive. If religion is the capacity of the human organism to transcend its biological nature through the formation of Self, personal identity etc., a religious dimension is added to everything human¹⁴, at least as a logical consequence. Luckmann's approach indeed is a totally new look at the old question of the definition of religion¹⁵, which also concerns us in this article.

A fundamental distinction is made between functional and substantial definitions of religion¹⁶. In the former, the functions of the phenomenon are used as criteria of

identification. Functional definitions of religion tend to be nominal and inclusive, since different orientations and activities may fulfil the same functions and, from that point of view, can be classified under a common heading. Thus, most inclusive is Luckmann's conception of the religious sphere, originating in the capacity of the human organism to transcend its biological nature. Other functional definitions are those in which religion is defined in Parsonian terms of values or as the highest and most general level of culture. Possibly both substantial and functional is the approach which defines religion as those beliefs and values that solve man's ultimate problems (Tillich).

A substantial and real definition, on the other hand, is a societal category, a proposition about the empirical world. Religion, or, in Robertson's terminology, *religious culture is that set of beliefs and symbols (and values deriving directly therefrom) pertaining to a distinction between an empirical and a super-empirical transcendent reality, the affairs of the empirical being subordinated in significance to the non-empirical*⁽⁷⁾.

Robertson purposely takes the option of a substantial definition mainly for methodological reasons. First, he wants to deal with the relationships between religious and other orientations to the problem of meaning, as already mentioned. He also wants to exclude from the sphere of religion non-religious systems of belief, the so-called *surrogate religion* such as the ideology of humanism, communism, nihilism and the like. Indeed, it is not logical to include into the category of religion ideological commitments that are, or explicitly profess to be areligious or even anti-religious. At the same time, it is not logical to separate totally ideological orientations of the mind, which have a similar function of contributing greatly to the identity of individuals. We will return to this problem shortly.

Second, Robertson's major reason for his substantial option is his area of investigation, which is the relationship between religion and society. Even a not too careful reading will easily reveal for example his repeatedly made distinction between the cultural and the social aspects of religion⁽⁸⁾. Being concerned with religion as a factor of the social system evidently seems to necessitate a careful definition and delineation of that factor.

Luckmann, in contrast, is concerned with what is religious in the individual's personality system. Religion here, is more function than factor. Although he takes a functional approach, he emphasizes that it is not very meaningful to begin with pointing out psychological or even social functions of religion before one has showed how religion comes into being, how meaning is created, in other words, what the anthropological condition of religion is. Luckmann may be criticized for leaving the various aspects of religion undefined, also, for over-evaluating the anthropological condition of religion, calling a religious phenomenon what is only condition of, or capacity for becoming religious — this we will refer to later, but his use of a

functional definition is most appropriate in relation to the general problem of meaning and personal identity, as I will try to show presently.

Identity, I think, can be strongly supported by any ideological orientation of the mind, religious or non-religious, because of internal and external reasons. Two internal reasons are related to man's specific biological and social nature. First, since children are born socially *premature*, i. e., without an identity of their own, they evidently have to develop one. This happens while they are standing in an internalizing relationship with the social environment, they cannot choose. Second, there is no room for choice in the way of developing an identity. Its determinant is the socialization process which is universal. While the internalized content may differ, its generalized content is universal too: ways of thinking, acting and patterns of fellowship. Pointing at the universal nature of socialization and its universal forms is not a trivial remark, especially because the latter are the exclusive, general categories of activity or externalization¹⁹, whose more or less satisfactory realization will leave the impression of the total fulfilment of human needs.

Because there is no choice neither concerning the content of an identity, nor concerning the way of arriving at it, it will be no exaggeration to say that the original blueprint for an identity resembles the phenomenon of imprinting in the case of newly born animals, as was first observed and described by K. Lorentz. Although primary socialization and the formation of an identity are actualized in a long process, its virtually unconscious (not willed) functioning explains, I think, the strong relationship of its content to the evolving identity.

Further, there are also external reasons for that relationship: the plausibility structure of social knowledge and the hierarchy of significance that is contained in a world view and its domain of symbols. The latter has been interestingly pointed out by Luckmann. To quote: *The authority of religious representations cannot be derived from the content of a given sacred theme taken in isolation. It rests upon the hierarchy of significance of the world view as a whole and, ultimately upon the transcendent quality of the latter*²⁰. This probably is a consequence of the nomic or ordering character of any socially constructed world, which constitutes a specific area of meaning at variance with or excluding many other meanings²¹. This nomic character is thought to be stronger still in the case of a symbolic universe, (a body of theoretical tradition), that integrates and legitimates not only individual biographies, but, when there is only one available, also the institutional order as a whole²².

It is, no doubt, this hierarchical arrangement of meaning that accounts for the absolutist tendency of any religion or ideology, which also explains its legitimating force. Let us consider a concrete example. In our societies there exists something that could be called a modernistic, atheistic way of thinking, which asserts that religion is nothing but a human projection and that men made their gods after their own image, not vice-versa. Although this secularized way of thinking is often con-

sidered to be the outcome of the decline of traditional religion in an industrializing society, it would be a mistake to forget its complex, theoretical background beginning with the gradual expansion of reason, the development of the science and the subsequent philosophies. Names like Gallileo, Dürwin, Feuerbach, Nietzsche, Marx, Freud and many other prophets of the modern times will come readily to mind. All this establishes the contemporary modernistic way of thinking as a respectable world view, or as a belief in its own right, whose supporting function of personal identity will be stronger, the more numerous its expert legitimaters and its common social adherents are²³). This is the first external link of ideology and identity. The second we find in the hierarchy of significance. As a kind of world view it is higher than, say, some mathematical theorems, the law of gravity, and certainly higher than the many imperatives of everyday life. Its reason probably is the general applicability of a world view as compared to those other propositions about one part of reality only. Again, its relationship to identity is thought to be strong because of the unconscious functioning of the hierarchy of significance.

Concluding, here, we can say that the necessity of a functional approach follows from the fact that in all those aspects of the relationship of a world view and identity, we are not concerned with its ideological content but merely with its functioning, which is thought to be universal. Also, because of the above mentioned internal and external aspects of the relationship of ideology and identity, it becomes understandable that any ideology can become the functional equivalent of religion. However, having a similar function does not yet warrant the classification of an unspecified system of meaning in the category of religion. This we will try to demonstrate further below.

Concerning the matter of the definition of religion, we can say, I think, that a definition of the object under study is part of the concerned conceptualization and of theory. It has to be compatible with the purpose of the study. Another point is that both substantial and functional definitions of religion, though used in a different context, cannot be opposed to each other in such a way as to effect contradicting positions of any problem. Consequently, a definition which serves in both contexts, should be possible in principle.

Our remaining task concerning Luckmann's theory of religion is to show, 1) that we certainly can find one anthropological condition of religion in the capacity of the individual to transcend his biological nature in a social setting, in other words, that religion has to do with the aspect of transcendency, but 2) that not every transcendent quality can be designated as religious. Actually, these are only two related points in the same argumentation about transcendence. Let us first turn our attention to the question what transcendence is and where it can be found.

Transcendence and Religiosity

According to Luckmann, transcendence and therefore religiosity, is found in the individuation of consciousness, the creation of meaning and the formation of personal identity. There is transcendence of individual biological nature because an individual would not be able, for instance, to create meaning depending on his own biological resources alone. Concerning this proposition I would like to argue that there is a quality of transcendence but not of religiosity, because transcendence and creation of meaning can be found in all human activity or externalization that succeeds in objectivation. Let us take some examples.

The making of an earthen vessel constitutes implicitly creation of meaning. We can imagine that early man, prompted by the needs of daily life, made the discovery by reflecting on the different qualities of clay. By making some kind of container out of mud, he gave a totally new meaning to that material and to himself by enlarging his own capacities and his self-consciousness as well. Stronger awareness of Self, in our example, as a potter, will be effected when this kind of activity gains social citizenship and when individuals are known as specialists in this craft. Growing perfection of skills will be accompanied by growing consciousness as a successful man. For our purpose here, it will not be necessary to belabor the circumstances, as are the social context, the degree of creativity or routinization of the work, appreciation of fellowmen etc., that will be responsible for a certain degree of success. In general, it can be said that there exists a strong possibility that role performance, though partial in nature²⁴) greatly enhances a person's meaning, and consequently has an ego-supporting function. The same argumentation holds for any other technological activity in its function of enlarging capacities and consciousness, none of which is a biologically given in the same way as the individuation of consciousness is not.

Another example is that of language²⁵). Not much is known with certainty about the origin of language, but the opinion seems to hold that it would not have arisen without some fundamental conditions. One condition is man's social nature as in the case of the creation of meaning. Another is man's capacity of interpreting certain selected elements in a situation as signs of something else, the realization of which supposes a combination of the capacity of expressing consciousness and that of referring to realities outside the subject. Concretely, language becomes objectified through the construction of signs by way of sounds or graphic representation.

Also language enables man to transcend the immediately given of individual experience, to interpret it, to analyse it into components etc. Further, although there is a tendency to confine meaning within a certain extent through the complex morphology (concepts, grammar and syntax) of a language, words and phrases can take on a great range of meaning according to the intention of the user and the social context. Because of all this, it is no exaggeration to say that language is the most

important means and material with which all culture, both personal and collective, is build up. This is the equivalent of saying that language, itself born from the interaction of subjects and objects, is the most important external means of intellectual growth, in other words, of transcending the biologically given of the individual organism.

A still different transcendence of biological nature can be found in the domain of human relations, as for example in the parental love relations. It is common knowledge in psychology²⁶⁾ that in order to become a normal person, a baby must be put at ease in his feeding, sleep and the relaxation of his bowels. This is necessary for physical as well as mental health. If a baby has the continued experience that his mother takes care of him when he is in need of her, he will learn to trust, and his first social achievement will be, as Erikson puts it, *his willingness to let the mother out of sight without anxiety or rage*. In the same context it is said that the absence of basic trust in the first period of one's life causes an unstable identity, or in other words, a neurotic or schizoid personality. From this it is more than clear that a trustworthy, i. e., a caring and loving person is a necessary condition for the healthy growth of a young person.

Further, it seems to be commonly taken for granted that care and love are beneficial to any human being throughout all of his life cycles. E. Fromm, for example, has written that for modern man, who has become free from external bonds and who is free to act and think as he sees fit, *positive freedom consists in the spontaneous activity of the total, integrated personality*. This spontaneous activity is best realized by engaging oneself freely in society *through work in which man becomes one with nature in the act of creation and through love, the foremost component of spontaneity, not love as the dissolution of another person, but love as spontaneous affirmation of others, as the union of the individual with others on the basis of the preservation of the individual self*²⁷⁾. This means that human happiness, being closely connected to one's fellowmen and to nature, is something that must be "reached", transcending one's own individual resources, transcending one's innate egocentrism.

Summarizing, growth and transcendence can be found in the three main areas of externalization: thought, action and fellowship as is shown by our examples. Paraphrasing Fromm, I would like to say that, because of man's social — and therefore always unfinished nature, growth and transcendence in one or more areas of externalization is essential to human happiness. Because growth only from within does not seem to be possible at all, positively, because an internalizing relationship with the outside, whether fellowmen, nature or culture, is a necessary condition for any growth, there will also be a certain degree of transcendence of biological nature in any growth. Consequently, transcendence and growth must be one condition of religion, because religion without gain, without meaning, is nearly a *contradictio in terminis*. On the other hand, if any transcendence of biological nature is to be called

a religious phenomenon, then most human activity would become religious, whether morally good, neutral or bad. The latter consequence would probably entail a still greater contradiction, but its discussion surpasses the scope of this article. We have to pursue the next point in the argument: how are religion and transcendence related?

We will begin with a few notes on the conceptual relationship of the two terms. That one of the meanings of the word "transcendence" is more or less antonymous with "immanence", no doubt, stems from the Judaeo-Christian belief in a transcendental God. As creator God is believed to be present to the world but not to be immanent in it. He "transcends" the empirical world but reveals Himself to man. Transcendence, then, is a qualification of the supernatural order, which means transcendence per excellence.

Kant still uses the word transcendence in the sense of exceeding all experience, but he demonstrated systematically that positive knowledge about transcendent realities is impossible. He argued that reason shows a tendency to go beyond the field of experience, surpassing the world of the senses, but that it is not able to create positive knowledge concerning its inevitable problems: the freedom of the will, the immortality of the soul and the existence of God. He concluded: *If ... these cardinal propositions are of no use to us, so far as knowledge is concerned, and are yet strongly recommended to us by our reason, their true value will probably be concerned with our practical interests only*²⁸.

The impossibility of positive metaphysics should bring with it the devaluation of the term "transcendence". However, there have been other attempts, not unrelated to Kant, to reevaluate the term religiously through approaching the supernatural in a non-rational way. One such attempt was made by R. Otto, who envisioned the *numinous* as an object of religious feelings. Otto argued that while the conceptual content of the supernatural is reduced to a negative one by reason, its emotional content on the contrary is eminently positive. In this connection he described the nature of the *numen* as is revealed in religious writings, songs, etc, which he summed up in his famous phrase: *Mysterium tremendum et fascinans*, an awe-inspiring and fascinating mystery²⁹.

Another use of the term transcendence, in the simple meaning of pointing beyond normal, everyday reality, is found in one book by P. Berger³⁰. The author, believing in the importance of religion, and in sympathy with theology, wanted to contribute to the recuperation of its lost strength in modern society. He, therefore, advocates an anthropologically based theology, one that starts, not with the supernatural but with the situation of man. He states that many *signals of transcendence can be found within the empirically given situation*. Such signals are found in such disparate human attitudes and activities as are the following. There is the generally recognized need for order and trust in the goodness of being, much in the same sense as is

mentioned above in connection with the first development in infants. Also, there is the orientation of human existence towards the future, namely, the attitude of hope especially in marginal situations, illustrated by the psychological difficulty of imagining one's own death or non-existence. Explained in the same sense also is the demand of absolute condemnation in the case of outrageously inhuman crimes against innocent people as an unforgivable violation of the moral order. Lastly, there is the effect of play and humour, which either suspend the rules of the serious world or relativizes them in laughter. All these are signals of transcendence, which contain an attempt to surpass the situation at hand. They point to a possibility of higher religious meaning, but still more, as Berger puts it, the expectation towards order and the attitude of hope, for instance, are most meaningful as religious belief. In other words, those expectations are only "really" meaningful if they have a fundament in reality, if there is life after death.

These notes about the term "transcendence" will be enough to illustrate that it is an eminently religious word. This, among other things, may have influenced Luckmann in qualifying as religious the transcendent aspect of the individuation of consciousness. Now, then, the final question: what kind of transcendence is fully religious? Certainly, we are encountering a religious phenomenon when people say they are relating to a transcendent or super-empirical reality, as mentioned in Robertson's definition. However, because we showed that religion cannot be concerned with all kinds of transcendence, and because there are religions, such as Zen Buddhism and others, that aim more directly or exclusively at "human" transcendence, we have to decide what basic measure of growth must be realized in order to qualify for a truly religious character. To do that, we will rely on the conceptualization of two students of religion, P. Tillich and W. James.

Tillich has argued that religion cannot be reduced to just one function of man's spiritual life, as is done often. Religion would stop to be religion if it were reduced to either the moral function (the good) or to the cognitive function (knowledge). Neither can religion be reduced to the aesthetic function (the beautiful) nor to the domain of feelings only, because it would lose its seriousness and its truth. Tillich maintains that religion is *the aspect of depth in the totality of the human spirit*. Further explained, this means that religion is *the ultimate concern: the unconditional seriousness in moral demands and the passionate longing for ultimate meaning in knowledge*. Aesthetically, religion is *the infinite desire to express ultimate meaning*. As an ultimate concern of such qualifications, religion gives us *the experience of the Holy, of something which is untouchable, awe-inspiring, an ultimate meaning, the source of ultimate courage*³¹.

Tillich's view is important because he forcefully expresses the humanly transcendent aspect of religion and also touches upon its mystery, the Holy. But where Tillich as a theologian envisions man's ultimate, spiritual ideal, W. James presents us

with a phenomenological description, from which he draws some general conclusions concerning the essential elements of religion. In some detail, then, James, who was trained in psychology, wanted to study religious feelings and impulses, preferably the original experiences of religious *virtuosi* rather than the habit-like religious life of common believers. Like Robertson, later, he refuses to consider as religious merely moral or philosophical attitudes towards life that are characterized by rationality and resignation as e. g. in the case of the classical stoics. Religion, for James, always signifies a serious state of mind. He states: *There must be something solemn, serious, and tender about any attitude which we denominate religious. If glad, it must not grin or snicker; if sad, it must not scream or curse.* Concerning religious feeling James also says: *It adds to life an enchantment which is not rationally or logically deducible from anything else... It is an absolute addition to the subject's range of life ... a new sphere of power*³²⁾.

After a thorough investigation of a wide variety of religious experiences, James concludes that the common nucleus of *all religion consists of two parts: an uneasiness and its solution:*

1/*The uneasiness, reduced to its simple terms, is a sense that there is "something wrong about us" as we naturally stand.*

2/*The solution is a sense that "we are saved from the wrongness" by making proper connection with the higher powers*³³⁾.

We can further generalize these propositions, I think, and relate them to our earlier discussion of the double definition of religion. Religion in the strict sense implies:

1/ An apprehension of the unfinished nature of man as an individual and social being, together with the insight that something can be done about it, in other words, that some progress or transcendence is possible.

2/ A belief in a *higher* transcendency. Both "belief" and "higher transcendency", here, mean that the goal or object of one's "insight" is not empirically given or not strictly verifiable, as is the case in what is understood as religious salvation and enlightenment.

A belief as described in the first point would be "functionally" religious, because of its ego-supporting aspect, which however, can also be found in non-religious ideals and ideologies. The added dimension in the second point makes it a "substantially" religious faith. If the above is correct, then it is clear that there is no contradiction between a functional and a substantial definition. Also, this formulation shows the difference as well as the likeness of religion and ideology.

Summary and Conclusion

Evidently, not all facets of Luckmann's theory of religion have been discussed, but I hope to have touched upon the main points of his analysis. As a positive eval-

uation, I think that his present work on religion represents an important thrust towards the advancement of sociological theory. As very valuable for theory as well as for religion itself, is his assertion that, before we analyse any psychological or social functions of the phenomenon, we have to investigate how religion comes into being, or, what its anthropological conditions are. The transcendence of biological nature in the individuation of consciousness and the construction of meaning is singled out as the most fundamental condition. Another very important aspect of religion or of any world view is its hierarchy of meaning, which, I think, is essential to the functional understanding of any ideology and its connection with identity.

On the other hand, Luckmann's claim of religious (elementary and non-specific) status for the above mentioned transcendence and hierarchy of meaning is criticizable. Only transcendence and hierarchy seem to be implied, both of which are important elements of religion but not exclusively of religion.

Things would have been less complicated if Luckmann had clearly distinguished from the beginning between the several aspects of religion, its personal, institutional and cultural aspects, and also between religious and non-religious orientations of the mind.

Interesting as a question but somewhat premature in this stage of investigation seems to be the repeatedly mentioned or hinted at *possibility of a new social form of religion characterized neither by diffusion of the sacred cosmos through the social structure nor by institutional specialization*³⁴). The main reasons for its prematurity are 1/ that Luckmann fails to take into account the "substantial" qualification of religion, the specific religious transcendence as mentioned by James, 2/ that there are still other conditions of religion, which may be less sociological but which nevertheless should be discussed before theorizing about new forms of religion can be fruitful. This does not mean, of course, that partially religious attitudes would be impossible. They exist in many varieties and are religiously meaningful.

The other conditions of religion, which I would like to discuss in a follow-up, can be traced in the following relationships:

- 1/ The connection of religion with nature, the physical world and its wonders that have inspired many religious attitudes and continue to do so even today. This could be termed the condition of religious ecology.
- 2/ The connection with the potentialities of the human spirit and its affinity for the religious dimension. There seems to be an aspect of "faith", to a certain extent present in all belief, which differs much from rational understanding. It is not immediately clear why some people have it and why others do not. This could be called the psycho-religious condition.
- 3/ The connection of religion and culture. No religion exists in a cultural vacuum. It is conditioned by cultural orientations, by thought, the artifacts of civilization and by history, all of which reveal some kind of transcendence. This cultural

connection could be termed also the socio-historical condition of religion.

- 4/ Lastly, there is the connection with behavior. Religion which is not manifested in behavior is probably only a partial religious attitude. Most significant here seems to be symbolic, religious activity and moral behavior.

All these are different dimensions and aspects of religion that have some universality. They are conditions or elements without which religion in the strict sense of the word is unthinkable. How these aspects relate to religion and to one another is, no doubt, a worthwhile but large area of investigation in the sociology of religion and related fields of study.

NOTES

- 1) T. Luckmann, *The Invisible Religion*: The Problem of Religion in Modern Society, Macmillan, 1967, pp. 17-40
- 2) Luckmann, *op. cit.*, Ch. III, pp. 41-49
- 3) P. Berger-T. Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*, Doubleday, 1966, esp. pp. 43-54
- 4) Luckmann, *op. cit.*, Ch. IV, pp. 51-61
- 5) Luckmann, *ibid.*, p. 61
- 6) Luckmann, *ibid.*, Ch. V, esp. pp. 71-72
- 7) M. Hill, *A Sociology of Religion*, Heineman, 1973, pp. 2-3, 266
- 8) Hill, *op. cit.*, pp. 252-260
- 9) E. Durkheim, *Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse*, Presses Universitaires de France, 1960, pp. 293-295
- 10) Durkheim, *op. cit.*, p. 594. My translation
- 11) Luckmann, *op. cit.*, p. 58
- 12) The same attitude is expressed by P. Berger in : *The Sacred Canopy*: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion, Anchor Books, 1967, pp. 179-185, and later more extensively in : *A Rumour of Angels*: Modern Society and the Rediscovery of the Supernatural, Pelican Books, 1969. In both texts it is argued that sociology for methodological reasons cannot but treat religion as a human projection. For the same reasons, also must be left outside its boundaries the question whether this projection corresponds to something "out there" or not.
- 13) Durkheim, *op. cit.*, pp. 597-599
- 14) R. Robertson, *The Sociological Interpretation of Religion*, Schocken Books, 1970, p. 41
- 15) As is also noted by J. Swyngedouw in some considerations about Luckmann added to the Japanese translation of *The Invisible Religion* : *Mienai Shūkyō*, Yorudansha, 1976, p. 188
- 16) The notes on this distinction are taken from Robertson, *op. cit.*, pp. 34-43
- 17) Robertson, *ibid.*, p. 47
- 18) Cf. Robertson, *op. cit.*, pp. 54-55, 57, 60, 65-67 and also Ch. IV, Religious Systems, Cultural and Social Aspects, pp. 78-105. In the same context considerable attention is paid to another distinction, namely, that between the religiosity of individuals

- and that of the social system. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 56-57
- 19) J. Wach used these categories as expressions of religious experience, Cf. *Wach's The Comparative Study of Religions*" Columbia University Press, 1958, and a related discussion by myself : *Joachim Wach's Sociology of Religion* in : Chiiki Shakaigaku no Shomondai, Kôyôshobô, 1979, esp. pp. 300-306
 - 20) Luckmann, *op. cit.*, p. 60
 - 21) Berger, 1967, pp. 19-22
 - 22) Berger-Luckmann, *op. cit.*, pp. 92-104
 - 23) Berger-Luckmann, *ibid.*, pp. 104-116, Conceptual Machineries of Universe Maintenance.
 - 24) Concerning roles and their relation to identity, cf., Berger-Luckmann, *op. cit.*, pp. 72-74
 - 25) This view of language is borrowed from E. Sapir, *Culture. Language and Personality*, University of California Presse 1949, pp. 6-14
 - 26) Cf. E. Erikson, *Childhood and Society*, Norton 1950, pp. 247-251
 - 27) E. Fromm, *Fear of Freedom*, Routledge 1942, p. 225 et passim
 - 28) I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Anchor Books, 1966, p. 512
 - 29) R. Otto, *Le sacré: L'élément non rationnel dans l'idée du divin et son relation avec le rationnel*, Payot (1929) pp. 19-52, esp., p. 49
 - 30) Berger, 1969, from which the following notes are taken, esp., from Ch. III, "Theological Possibilities" : starting with man, pp. 66-96
 - 31) P. Tillich, *Theology of Culture*, Oxford University Press 1959, pp. 3-9, esp., 8-9
 - 32) W. James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, Fontana 1960, pp. 56 and 64 respectively
 - 33) James, *op. cit.*, p. 484
 - 34) Luckmann, *op. cit.*, pp. 104-105, cf. also pp. 27, 40, 90-91, and 103